

What is claimed is:

1. An air bag launch assembly for launching a device from an underwater vehicle comprising:

at least one canister constructed and arranged to hold a device to be launched; and

at least one air bag inflator supported on each canister and constructed and arranged to launch the canister.

2. The device of claim 1 further comprising a container having at least one canister supported therein constructed and arranged to be supported on a hull of the vehicle.

3. The device of claim 2 further comprising a support framework constructed and arranged to support said at least one canister within said container.

4. The device of claim 2 wherein said container is substantially watertight and includes a body portion and a hatch.

5. The device of claim 2 further comprising a tether attached between said at least one canister and said container.

6. The device of claim 1 wherein each canister comprises:

a body to contain the device to be launched;

a top enclosure joined to the top of said body; and

a bottom enclosure joined to the bottom of said body.

7. The device of claim 6 wherein said at least one air bag inflator comprises a top air bag inflator supported on the top enclosure of said at least one canister and constructed and arranged to lift said at least one canister during launch.

8. The device of claim 6 wherein said at least one air bag inflator comprises a side air bag inflator supported on the body of said at least one canister and constructed and arranged to stabilize said canister.

9. The device of claim 1 further comprising a tether attached to said at least one canister and attachable to the underwater vehicle.

10. The device of claim 1 further comprising a device to be launched positioned in said canister.

11. The device of claim 1 wherein said air bag inflator comprises:

an air bag joined to said at least one canister; and

an inflation means in communication with said air bag for inflating said air bag.

12. The device of claim 11 wherein said inflation means is a gas generator.

13. The device of claim 11 wherein said inflation means is a compressed gas source.